

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03

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----- 116921

P R 250945Z JUL 74

FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5064

INFO AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 4853

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, KS

SUBJECT: BISHOP CHI HAK SON

REF: SEOUL 4772

1. IN PAST TWO DAYS THERE HAVE BEEN SERIES OF
DISCLOSURES AND DEVELOPMENTS IN THE BISHOP CHI CASE.

2. PAPAL NUNCIO HAS TOLD AMBASSADOR THAT EARLIER THIS
WEEK HE WAS ARRANGING WITH THE ROKG AND WITH ROME
TO HAVE BISHOP CHI LEAVE KOREA AFTER SHORT INTERVAL
FOLLOWING BISHOP'S TRIAL. COMPLETION OF THIS DEAL
WITH ROME MAY HAVE BEEN THE "GOOD NEWS" THAT NUNCIO
EXPECTED TO GIVE ROKG AND THE REASON NUNCIO
REQUESTED POSTPONEMENT OF TRIAL UNTIL JULY 26 (REFTEL).

3. BISHOP CHI APPARENTLY HAD OTHER PLANS. HE
ARRANGED FOR HIS OWN ABDUCTION FROM ST. MARY'S HOSPITAL,
WHERE ACCORDING TO THE NUNCIO HE HAD BEEN PLACED
BECAUSE OF A RECURRENCE OF HIS DIABETIC CONDITION.
ON MORNING JULY 23, BISHOP HELD PREARRANGED PRESS
CONFERENCE ATTENDED EAGERLY BY FOREIGN PRESS
(INCLUDING WASHINGTON POST, NEWSWEEK, ABC)
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WHEREIN HE ATTACKED GOVERNMENT AND ISSUED A

"STATEMENT OF CONSCIENCE" WHICH EMBASSY HAS OBTAINED AND IS FORWARDING BY SEPTTEL.

4. AS BISHOP UNDOUBTEDLY INTENDED, THESE DEVELOPMENTS DISRUPTED NUNCIO'S NEGOTIATIONS WITH ROKG AND ROME AND LED TO BISHOP'S ARREST BY KCIA LATE JULY 23. WE HAVE BEEN ASSURED THAT SINCE HIS ARREST THE BISHOP HAS BEEN PHYSICALLY WELL TREATED BY THE KCIA, ALTHOUGH HE UNDOUBTEDLY IS BEING INTERROGATED EXTENSIVELY. KCIA OFFICIALS BELIEVE THE BISHOP "HAS A LOT TO ANSWER FOR" AND IT IS POSSIBLE HE WILL BE COURT-MARTIALED AS NOW SCHEDULED ON JULY 26.

5. IN COURSE OF CONVERSATION WITH DCM, NUNCIO EXPRESSED FURY AT BISHOP CHI, POUNDED HIS FIST ON THE TABLE, AND WENT ON TO SAY BISHOP HAD NO RIGHT TO DO WHAT HE HAD DONE. NUNCIO, WHO HAS LONG EXPRESSED STRONG ANIMOSITY TOWARD BISHOP'S POLITICAL MILITANCY, SEES CHI AS PRIME THREAT TO HIS EFFORTS TO AVOID CONFRONTATION BETWEEN CATHOLIC CHURCH AND ROKG.

6. AT A SOCIAL OCCASION EVENING OF JULY 24, AMBASSADOR ASKED PRIMIN KIM CHONG PIL ABOUT BISHOP CHI'S SITUATION. AMBASSADOR ASKED HOW THE BISHOP WAS BEING TREATED, AND THE PRIMIN ASSERTED THAT HE HAD GIVEN STRICT ORDERS THAT THE BISHOP BE WELL TREATED. KCIA DIRECTOR WELL UNDERSTOOD THIS, HE SAID, NO ONE WOULD PHYSICALLY HARM THE BISHOP. PURPOSE OF ARREST WAS SIMPLY TO ISOLATE HIM AND TO PREVENT FURTHER POLITICAL ACTIVITY. AMBASSADOR SUGGESTED THAT GOVERNMENT ALLOW PAPAL NUNCIO TO SEE BISHOP CHI, AND KIM CHONG PIL AGREED THIS WOULD BE DONE. NUNCIO HAD EARLIER TOLD DCM THAT HE CONCERNED OVER BISHOP'S DIABETIC CONDITION AND INTENDED TO REQUEST RIGHT TO VISIT HIM.

7. IN MEANTIME, CATHOLIC PRIEST QUOTING BISHOP MC NAUGHTON OF INCHON HAS TOLD EMBOFF THAT AFTERNOON
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JULY 23 AND JULY 24, TWO HIGH KCIA OFFICIALS VISITED ALL BISHOPS. THEY WERE TOLD IN NAME OF PRESIDENT PARK THAT IF CHURCH LEADERS INSISTED ON SUPPORTING BISHOP CHI AND DISSENTERS' CRITICISM OF GOVERNMENT IN GUISE OF RELIGION, ROKG WAS PREPARED TO WITHDRAW ALL PROTECTION AND PRIVILEGES NOW ENJOYED BY CHURCH, DENY SECURITY CLEARANCES TO CATHOLICS IN HIGH GOVT POSITIONS, AND DENOUNCE CHURCH AS HOSTILE FORCE

IN KOREA. CARDINAL HIMSELF WAS TOLD BY KCIA THAT ANY BISHOP MAKING STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF BISHOP CHI WOULD BE SUBJECT TO TRIAL FOR VIOLATION OF EMERGENCY MEASURE NO. 4.

8. BISHOPS WERE STUNNED AND FRIGHTENED BY VISITORS' DECLARATION AND BEGAN TO CONSULT WITH EACH OTHER AND NUNCIO ON WAYS TO AVOID CONFRONTATION. NUNCIO PLEADED WITH BISHOPS TO ACCEPT COMPROMISE FORMULA SUGGESTING ADOPTION OF DECLARATION THAT BISHOP CHI'S CRITICISM AND DENUNCIATION OF GOVERNMENT AND YUSHIN CONSTITUTION WERE IMPRESSIONS OF "HIS OWN CONSCIENCE," NOT THE VIEWS OF THE CHURCH. BISHOPS' CONFERENCE MEETING JULY 25 IS REPORTEDLY DISCUSSING PROPOSED DECLARATION.

9. ACCORDING TO SAME SOURCE, CARDINAL KIM IS NOW UNDER STRONG PRESSURE FROM NUNCIO AND CONSERVATIVE BISHOPS TO AVOID SHOWDOWN WITH ROKG AND NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH STATE. WHILE THIS MAY NOT BE HIS PERSONAL WISH, HE IS SAID TO FIND HIMSELF IN MINORITY. CARDINAL CONTINUES TO ADMONISH PRIESTS TO THINK OF THEIR DECISION IN PERSPECTIVE OF HISTORICAL ROLE OF CHURCH IN KOREA.

10. COMMENT: BISHOP CHI, WHO SEES HIMSELF AS MARTYR AND IS A MAN OF STRENGTH AND COURAGE, HAS NOW FORCED PAPAL NUNCIO AND ROKG INTO DIRECT CONFRONTATION WITH HIM. CARDINAL KIM AND OTHER BISHOPS MUST DECIDE WHETHER THEY WILL FOLLOW HIS EXAMPLE OR GIVE IN TO PRESSURES ROKG NOW PLACING ON THEM. BUT EVEN IF CHURCH HIERARCHY DISASSOCIATES ITSELF FROM BISHOP'S ACTIONS THIS NOT LIKELY TO RESOLVE ISSUE. RATHER DIVISIONS AND RESENTMENTS NOT ONLY WITHIN CATHOLIC CONFIDENTIAL

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CHURCH BUT THROUGHOUT CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY ARE LIKELY TO DEEPEN.
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